United Nations A/53/676

General Assembly

Distr.: General
18 November 1998

Original: English

Fifty-third session
Agenda item 30
United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Status of implementation of actions described in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform"

Report of the Secretary-General

1. By its resolution 52/12 A of 12 November 1997, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the actions described in his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" (A/51/950 and Add.1–7) to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. The present report has been prepared in response to that request.

2. The Secretary-General is grateful for and has carefully considered the views and comments expressed by Member States in implementing the various reform initiatives. As indicated in his report to the General Assembly on the work of the Organization (A/53/1), while actions on many areas have already produced positive results within the Secretariat and in its relations with the programmes and funds, the consideration of several other questions will continue to be dealt with by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. The continuing process of reform aimed at building a more effective and efficient Organization remains a priority consideration for the United Nations.

3. The status of implementation with regard to all actions* is set out below.

* The headings corresponding to the actions have been abbreviated for the purpose of the present report. The full text is contained in document A/51/950.

98-35910 (E) 201198

Action 1. Senior Management Group

The Senior Management Group, chaired by the Secretary-General or, in his absence, by the Deputy Secretary-General, has been established and has met every week since September 1997. It includes the heads of departments, offices, funds and programmes in New York and away from Headquarters. Teleconferencing services enable senior managers who are not in New York to participate in these meetings. The focus is on the Organization's priorities and topics that require collective review and decision-making, an approach that emphasizes strategic coordination and information sharing.

Action 2. Strategic Planning Unit

The Strategic Planning Unit has been established and a Director appointed in August 1998. It supports the Secretary-General and the Senior Management Group in considering questions on their agenda within broader and longer time-frames of reference.

Action 3. Phasing-out of gratis personnel

The phasing-out of gratis personnel in accordance with an established plan is under way. Accelerated procedures are in place to ensure the speedy recruitment of staff to replace gratis personnel, who will be phased out entirely by 28 February 1999.

Action 4. Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in the field

Standard directives for Special Representatives of the Secretary-General heading multidimensional peacekeeping operations have been approved. They constitute a general framework within which each Special Representative will implement the mandate contained in the relevant Security Council or General Assembly resolution. The directives were prepared by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in close consultation with the Department of Political Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other departments and agencies concerned, and agreed upon in the Executive Committee for Peace and Security.

Action 5. Post-conflict peace-building

The Department of Political Affairs, in its capacity as focal point within the United Nations for post-conflict peace-building, is in the process of reviewing and the implementing measures aimed at strengthening the ability to improve the implementation by the United Nations system of post-conflict peace-building initiatives. Within the context of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), one of the practical manifestations of this endeavour is the ongoing elaboration of a "strategic framework approach for response to and recovery from crisis", to be applied to a small number of countries where the United Nations has an acknowledged political mandate and leadership role for conflict resolution and peace-building; where the situation is characterized by the breakdown or absence of regular mechanisms for consultation between the Government, the United Nations and donors and where the situation requires a multidimensional response by the United Nations and a high degree of collaboration of outside parties. This approach was first tested in Afghanistan and lessons learned from that exercise are in the process of being synthesized and may be applied to a second test case. The Deputy Secretary-General has been given responsibility for the overall elaboration and implementation of this approach and for ensuring that all parts of the United Nations system are in agreement with its modalities. While this will apply to a small number of countries, elements of the strategic framework approach may well also be applicable in other countries in various stages of recovery from crisis. Reference is also made in this context to the note by the Secretary-General (A/52/430/Add.1) on coordination between United Nations agencies involved in peace-building which contains comments by the members of ACC on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Coordination at Headquarters and the field level between the United Nations agencies involved in peace-building: an assessment of possibilities" (JIU/REP/97/4).

The strategic framework approach is predicated on the assumption that successful peace-building requires a mutually reinforcing political strategy and assistance programme, incorporating human rights considerations and humanitarian and development programmes, and intends thus to provide the conceptual tools and institutional mechanisms for all concerned partners in a given country — the United Nations, donors, non-governmental organizations and national actors — to work together more effectively on the basis of agreed principles and objectives.

While the creation of the Executive Committee for Peace and Security has markedly improved the level of

coordination and collaboration among departments of the United Nations in situations where post-conflict peace-building initiatives are required, the Department of Political Affairs is also in the process of reviewing its internal structure with a view to improving its ability to implement meaningfully its role as focal point for post-conflict peace-building, including modalities for closer cooperation with the United Nations system as a whole. The results of this review will be incorporated into the submission for the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001.

Action 6. Disarmament

The Department for Disarmament Affairs was established in January 1998 and an Under-Secretary-General appointed in February 1998; its organizational structure entered into force in June 1998. It comprises the Office of the Under-Secretary-General and five branches: the Conference on Disarmament Secretariat and Conference Support Branch (located at Geneva); the Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch; the Conventional Arms (including Practical Disarmament Measures) Branch; the Monitoring, Database and Information Branch; and the Regional Disarmament Branch (comprising regional activities and regional centres).

Action 7. Role of the Secretariat in economic and social affairs

(a) **Substantive Economic and Social Council secretariat.** Enhancing policy and programme coherence in the economic and social fields, in support of the policy-making and coordination functions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly and of the process of reform and strengthening of the Council is a key function of the new, consolidated Department of Economic and Social Affairs, engaging all of its substantive divisions, as well as of the United Nations programmes (including the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)) and the regional commissions, comprising the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, for which the Department serves as the convenor. Interactions between the Economic and Social Council and ACC are also being strengthened. Within this framework, an Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs has been appointed, with the responsibility for, *inter alia*, assisting the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs in coordinating substantive support to the Council and for overseeing the substantive Council secretariat established in the Department through its Division for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination. The Assistant Secretary-General also serves as Secretary of ACC, reporting in that function to the Secretary-General, and oversees in that capacity a new "identifiable" Office for Inter-Agency Affairs, staffed primarily by officials seconded by programmes and agencies and charged with servicing ACC, as envisaged in paragraph 140 of the Secretary-General's reform programme (A/51/950).

(b) **Review by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.** A review undertaken by the Department and UNCTAD has been completed and approved by the Secretary-General. The outcome provides for a more effective division of labour, as well as closer interaction between the two entities, within their respective mandates, in the macroeconomic area. It includes provision for the issuance, at the beginning of each year, of a joint report on the United Nations perspective on the world economic situation and prospects, as well as guidelines to ensure better complementarity in the coverage of, respectively, the *World Economic and Social Survey* and the *Trade and Development Report*. The ongoing work of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs is also relevant to furthering the objectives of this action.

Action 8. Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention

The Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention has been established to enable the Organization to focus and enhance its capacity to address the inter-related issues of drug control, crime prevention and international terrorism in all its forms. The Office comprises the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention. It is headed by an Executive Director, at the Under-Secretary-General level, who also serves as the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna.

Action 9. United Nations Development Group

(a) **Composition**. The United Nations Development Group and its Executive Committee have been established and are fully operational. The Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group, which is chaired by the

Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), comprises UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), with the World Food Programme (WFP) and other entities participating as warranted by their interests and mandates.

(b) **Resident Coordinator system**. New measures have been undertaken to strengthen the Resident Coordinator system, including a widened pool for the selection of resident coordinators. The number of resident coordinators from organizations other than UNDP is being increased, as are the number of women resident coordinators. In countries where the Resident Coordinator is also the Director of a United Nations information centre (UNIC), he or she will undertake this responsibility in accordance with the UNIC Director benchmark job description provided by the Department of Public Information.

Related developments at the inter-agency level, within the context of ACC, include the endorsement of the Resident Coordinator job description at the September 1998 meeting of the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ); new inter-agency selection procedures for resident coordinators, including the first United Nations competency assessment exercise; and the convening in December 1998 of an inter-agency selection advisory panel to review all Resident Coordinator candidates for 1999 vacancies for presentation to the Administrator.

A new Resident Coordinator annual report review mechanism was introduced in 1998. Small inter-agency readers' groups reviewed 130 annual reports; based on their assessments, responses were sent to all United Nations country teams. The first Resident Coordinator appraisal exercise, in which all members of ACC were invited to participate, was completed in 1998. The Administrative and Management Guidelines for the Resident Coordinator System were approved by CCPOQ and will be issued by ACC in early 1999 as one chapter of the revised ACC Guidelines for the Resident Coordinator System.

Action 10. Country-level coordination

(a) **United Nations Development Assistance Framework**. A United Nations Development Assistance Framework pilot phase was implemented in 18 countries, namely, Colombia, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, the Philippines, Romania, Senegal, South Africa, Turkey, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. Lessons learned from the pilot exercise will contribute to the finalization of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework guidelines and the establishment of an adequate support system.

The first joint session of the Executive Boards of UNICEF and UNDP/UNFPA, held in January 1998, reviewed the United Nations Development Assistance Framework experience in Viet Nam and discussed the impact of reform on development operations. The country teams for Mozambique and Guatemala briefed Member States during the operational segment of the Economic and Social Council on the implementation of reform measures. An assessment of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework pilot phase was initiated in May 1998, and an assessment workshop was held from 28 to 30 September. Key recommendations resulting from this exercise were presented to the Second Committee of the General Assembly in October 1998 during a panel discussion with members of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group.

(b–c) **United Nations Houses**. The Secretary-General has inaugurated United Nations Houses, where the organizations of the United Nations system share common premises and services, in five countries. Thirty-two countries have been approved for this designation and a list of 12 countries is currently under review for possible United Nations House designation. Furthermore, work is under way, in close consultation with CCPOQ, to review guidelines on common and shared services and premises at the country level.

Action 11. Financing of development and technical cooperation

(a) **Core resources**. A note by the Secretary-General on core resources for development (A/52/847) was issued on 31 March 1998 for the consideration of Member States. In its meeting in September 1998, the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA decided that both organizations should develop a multi-year funding framework. The Executive Board also decided to designate its second regular session as the time when States members of UNDP and UNFPA would announce their voluntary core contributions, including a firm commitment for the current year, and for those in a position to do so, a firm contribution or indication of contribution for the following year and a firm or tentative contribution for the third year.

(b) **Office for Development Financing**. A development financing capacity is being established under the supervision of the Deputy Secretary-General.

Action 12. Environment and human settlements

A Task Force on the Environment and Human Settlements was established under the chairmanship of the Executive Director of UNEP. On the basis of the recommendations made by the Task Force, the Secretary-General submitted a report to the General Assembly on measures to strengthen UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (A/53/463).

Action 13. Humanitarian affairs

(a–c) **Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs — core functions**. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was established in January 1998, headed by an Under-Secretary-General. It comprises the Policy, Advocacy and Information Division, the Emergency Liaison Branch, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) Secretariat and the Executive Office, in New York; and the Complex Emergency Response and Consolidated Appeal Process Branch, the Disaster Response Branch and the IASC/ECHA Liaison Unit, at Geneva. The restructuring and restaffing of the Office has been completed.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has focused on the core functions mandated by General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991: coordination, advocacy and policy development. Some functions have been divested to other entities within the United Nations system, as follows: the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has been serving as the focal point for all mine-related issues and activities while the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs retains responsibility for humanitarian advocacy; the Iraq Programme has been established as a separate office in the Secretariat; the Pisa warehouse is being transferred to WFP; and UNDP has assumed responsibility for operational activities for natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness.

A report on the methods of financing natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness beyond the biennium 1998–1999 has been issued (A/53/641). As per the reform programme, the function was transferred to UNDP and the funds for 1998 from the $2.3 million for the biennium have been made available to UNDP. UNDP has established a disaster management programme, based in Geneva. The Emergency Relief Coordinator has retained responsibility for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, together with its related staffing and resources.

(d) **Inter-Agency Standing Committee**. Since his appointment, the Emergency Relief Coordinator has worked to strengthen IASC as the main consultative body for humanitarian agencies and engaged them in proactive and collaborative efforts to deal with a selected number of key issues. These include internally displaced persons, the strengthening of the consolidated appeal process, the security of humanitarian workers, field coordination mechanisms, strengthening the links between human rights and humanitarian action, the introduction of a coordinated response to the humanitarian consequences of environmental and technological disasters, the use of inter-agency teams for contingency planning and to negotiate the acceptance of humanitarian principles in countries in conflict, and advocacy of humanitarian issues.

Following reservations expressed by the majority of IASC members, the Committee advised the Secretary-General to reconsider the establishment of a Steering Committee of IASC.

(e) **Consolidated appeal process**. IASC is guiding the improvement and strengthening of the consolidated appeals process as a programming instrument that emphasizes strategy development at the field level as a continuous process leading to monitoring and review. The improvement embraces prioritization as a central thrust of the process. The importance of involving all stakeholders, including host Governments and non-governmental organizations, has been recognized and accepted as an integral part of the process.

(f) **Coordination of responses to complex emergencies**. As part of his core functions, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, in consultation with members of IASC, appoints humanitarian coordinators. Since the establishment of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, resident coordinators have in most cases also been appointed humanitarian coordinators (e.g., in Burundi and Rwanda). It was agreed to continue to have a separate Humanitarian Coordinator in Angola in the light of the situation on the ground. In instances where the need for a lead agency is justified, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, in consultation with IASC, may designate an appropriate agency as the lead agency to coordinate the response to complex emergencies.

Action 14. Human rights secretariat

The reorganization of the human rights secretariat has been implemented. It has been consolidated in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Action 15. Coordination with other United Nations programmes

(a) **Role of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Executive Committees.** The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights participates, in particular through meetings of the Executive Committees and the Senior Management Group, in the Organization's activities in relation to conflicts or post-conflict situations that have a human rights dimension. This includes the provision of background papers and the participation of the High Commissioner or a senior representative in those meetings.

(b) **Analysis of technical assistance**. Pursuant to paragraph 201 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/950), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights assigned a team, within existing resources, to carry out an analysis of technical assistance provided by United Nations entities in areas related to human rights, with a view to improving complementarity of action. A questionnaire was sent to 40 United Nations entities so as to gather relevant information on mandate; present coverage of human rights-related assistance, including levels and distribution; policy formulation and coordination arrangements; project identification, monitoring and evaluation procedures; and joint initiatives with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

A number of areas for collaboration have been identified, including the following: the systematic provision of human rights training for United Nations field staff; further integration of support for human rights concerns into development assistance programming; joint needs assessments leading to joint human rights projects at the national, regional and global levels; the assignment of human rights officers, as appropriate, at the national level to strengthen the country programme and at the regional level as a resource to facilitate the sharing of experience.

As a result of the impetus given by the Secretary-General's reform report, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is exploring the possibility of concluding memoranda of understanding with a number of United Nations bodies, agencies, programmes and funds. In March 1998, a memorandum of understanding with UNDP was signed, which will result not only in increased cooperation with that body, but will also strengthen United Nations country teams through the Resident Coordinator system.

(c) **Level of representation in New York.** The New York Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is now headed by an officer at the D-2 level.

Action 16. Support for intergovernmental and monitoring bodies and special procedures

(a) **Review of mechanisms.** The Commission on Human Rights decided at its fifty-fourth session to request its Bureau to undertake, on the basis of open-ended consultations, a review of the mechanisms of the Commission, with a view to making recommendations thereon to the Commission at its fifty-fifth session. The Commission also agreed on a new agenda, comprising 21 items instead of 26. The report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the follow-up to the World Conference on Human Rights would be the first substantive item.

The High Commissioner has appointed an internal Task Force on Human Rights Mechanisms to lead an in-house process, the purpose of which is to provide the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with a distinctive input on the issues, including identifying realistic measures that could improve the effectiveness and impact of United Nations human rights mechanisms being undertaken by the Bureau of the Commission and of the planned academic review of the treaty system.

(b) **Servicing the treaty body system.** The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has made considerable efforts to expand and improve its Web site.

Action 17. Civil society

(a) **Gatherings with leaders of key sectors.** A number of encounters between the Secretary-General and representatives of key sectors of civil society have taken place. In recent months, the Secretary-General has met with, among others, leaders of free trade unions, schools of international affairs, television arts and sciences, major non-governmental organizations and the business community.

Another similar encounter, with the directors of think-tanks and policy research institutes from all continents, will be held in the early part of 1999. Through these encounters, a number of partnerships of benefit to the United Nations have been created with civil society actors.

The Secretary-General also continues to meet individually with the heads of non-governmental groupings (such as the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Status with the United Nations and the Department of Public Information/NGO Executive Committee), religious leaders and parliamentarians on a regular basis. The establishment of regional affiliates of the Academic Council on the United Nations System in Asia and Scandinavia, which is well under way, will facilitate further exchanges with various elements of civil society in those regions.

(b) **Liaison officers.** All departments have designated liaison officers who participate in the inter-departmental working group on NGOs, chaired by the Assistant Secretary-General for External Relations. The latter has conducted preliminary consultations with the Office of Human Resources Management and the United Nations Staff College on the design of specific training programmes. The Staff College is expected to make specific proposals in this regard.

(c) **Inter-agency business liaison.** The objectives of this measure are being pursued, in the first instance, by strengthening arrangements, through the new Office for Inter-Agency Affairs (A/51/950, para. 140). A particular effort is being made to promote more systematic exchanges of information among United Nations agencies on their practices and experience in cooperating with the business community, and to make information about the United Nations system more accessible to the private sector, particularly through electronic networking linking business-specific Web pages established by the relevant United Nations agencies.

(d) **Dialogue with business.** The Secretary-General has established an ongoing dialogue with various business associations in order to promote common interests.

Action 18. Human resources management reform

The Task Force on Human Resources Management, established by the Secretary-General, met between February and June 1998 and submitted a report to the Secretary-General with recommendations for change. The Task Force was supported by five working groups in the areas of human resources planning; recruitment and placement; staff administration; staff development, performance management and career support; and conditions of service.

The report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform, which drew on the recommendations set out by the Task Force, was submitted to the General Assembly at its current session (A/53/414).

Action 19. Training and redeployment programme

The General Assembly was informed, in the note by the Secretariat of 10 November 1997 (A/52/584), that no additional resources have been requested for the establishment of a one-time training and redeployment programme. Accordingly, redeployment and training, where necessary, of staff affected by the reform process is being conducted by the Office of Human Resources Management within existing resources. Further investment is required in staff training in support of reform, including with respect to managerial capacity-building, delegation of authority and utilization of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS).

Action 20. Advice on senior appointments

An informal group of independent advisers on senior appointments was established in 1997. It comprises prominent individuals who are familiar with the United Nations system. The Secretary-General, as and when necessary, consults them with regard to senior-level appointments.

Action 21. Dividend for development

Further to the report of the Secretary-General on reduction and refocusing of non-programme costs (A/52/758), which explained the concept, the report of the Secretary-General on the Development Account (A/52/1009) was submitted to the General Assembly for consideration. It provides details on the sustainability, modalities of implementation, specific purposes and associated performance criteria for the use of resources. To date, $13.1 million has been generated from productivity gains in 1996–1997 and transferred to this Account.

The Secretary-General's proposals call for streamlining of the administrative bureaucracy of the United

Nations. All programme managers have been requested to contribute to this effort by carrying out a critical review of their activities with a view to making the United Nations more productive. In this regard, the following areas are being given particular attention: simplification and streamlining of processes and procedures, discontinuation of activities and outputs that have outlived their usefulness, reduction in administrative redundancies by delegating more to programme managers, creation of an electronic United Nations and modernization of the secretarial function. Over 300 ideas for improving productivity have been pursued, which will free up resources and make them available for redeployment to the economic and social sector.

Proposals for the utilization of funds appropriated from productivity gains in 1996–1997, under section 34, for the current biennium (1998–1999) are currently being considered by the General Assembly. The report of the Secretary-General (A/53/374) contains a set of proposals put forward by the various entities of the Executive Committee for Economic and Social Affairs, convened by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, who is also the Programme Manager of the Development Account. These proposals have been developed within the Committee to match the initial appropriation ($13.1 million) and are based on the need to assist developing countries in benefiting from the global revolution in information technology. The proposals assist in the promotion of South-South cooperation and in the networking of institutions and experts from developing countries for promoting development in the context of a rapidly globalizing world.

Action 22. Management reviews

Concerted efforts have been made towards developing productivity improvement projects as indicated under action 21. Building on the lessons of efficiency reviews, departments and offices will continue to carry out management reviews to enhance the delivery of mandated programmes and strengthen services to Member States.

Action 23. Delegation of authority

In response to General Assembly resolution 52/220 of 22 December 1997, the Secretary-General submitted a note on the impact of the implementation of pilot projects on budgetary practices and procedures (A/52/852) to the Assembly at its resumed fifty-second session, in March 1998. A pilot project on the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is under implementation. ECLAC submitted a progress report (LC/G/2011(SES.27/7)) to the Commission and is continuing its implementation of the project, involving the delegation of limited authority to line managers in the areas of human resources management and financial resources.

Action 24. Review of rules and administrative issuances

Staff Regulations and Rules, Financial Regulations and Rules and other relevant regulations and rules of the Organization are under review for simplification, with the goal of reducing them to the minimum. A number of working groups have been set up and efforts are being made to develop guidelines for the application of the revised rules, related training and streamlining of processes that can be improved as a result of these revisions. With regard to the reform of administrative issuances, new "rules" concerning the issuance of Secretary-General's bulletins, administrative instructions and information circulars have been established. Secretary-General's bulletins for each Secretariat unit are being issued under the new format of administrative issuances, which replaced the Organizational Manual that previously existed. Bulletins for about one half of the Secretariat units have already been issued, and others are awaiting issuance.

Action 25. Simplification of processes

Procurement. Procurement procedures have been reviewed to ensure that they are in line with best practices, and that there is better planning of programme needs to identify common requirements and provide adequate lead time for the procurement process. In addition, a revised version 01 of the Procurement Manual has been issued.

Human resources. Under the aegis of the Task Force on Human Resources Management, detailed proposals for simplified processes in the area of human resources management were prepared and submitted to the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General has submitted a report on human resources management to the General Assembly (A/53/414), as indicated under action 18.

Finance. The Controller has instituted a review of the complementarity between his Office and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with respect to the support provided to peacekeeping missions in the financial area. A detailed and exhaustive list of all functions in this area has

been established and the respective offices will identify separately the activities they carry out in respect of these functions. This will indicate the complementarities and redundancies so that appropriate actions aimed at simplification can be taken thereafter. This exercise should conclude in time for the report of the budget requirements for the support account for the period from July 1999 to June 2000.

Other processes. Other processes for review include: (a) delegation of authority to programme managers to dispose of certain items of low value, and (b) delegation of authority to programme managers to purchase items costing under $2,500. Programme delivery will benefit by better response to operational requirements, with reduced cost of disposal of assets and reduced lead time for purchases.

Action 26. Common services

(a) **Expansion and strengthening.** A Task Force on Common Services, chaired by the Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services, who is Executive Coordinator for Common Services, has been established. A strategy being implemented has three major objectives: (i) to improve the efficiency, flexibility and cost-effectiveness of existing services; (ii) to extend common services to other "client" organizations; and (iii) to promote the common service approach in other United Nations offices outside New York. Several working groups were established in the following substantive areas, with set objectives and plans of action: procurement, information technology and communication, IMIS, personnel services (including medical), financial services (including banking and treasury), transportation and traffic operations, security and safety services, facilities management, printing services and archives/records management.

In procurement, work has focused simultaneously on New York and Copenhagen. Working linkages have been established between common services and the Inter-Agency Procurement Working Group (IAPWG). The Working Group for Procurement has developed harmonized financial regulations to govern procurement activities which were presented by UNDP and UNFPA to their governing bodies for approval. The other United Nations entities, including the Secretariat, will follow. A United Nations common supplier database (UNCSD) was launched in May 1998 as a joint venture providing possibilities for joint purchase arrangements. This could be an essential element in future electronic procurement initiatives which the Working Group is continuing to review. As to information technology and communication infrastructure, the Information Technology Common Service Management Committee has been established and work on a common approach is in progress.

(b) **Common service facilities, New York.** Efforts are being made to identify opportunities for extending common service facilities to the regional and country levels. Consultations on possible linkages are under way with other groups such as the United Nations Development Group, CCPOQ and the Joint Consultative Group on Policy on how linkages may be established.

Vienna. In accordance with the memorandum of understanding of 1997, common and joint services at the Vienna International Centre are administered and managed by one of the United Nations organizations on behalf of all partner organizations at the Centre, using the shared responsibilities approach. The current common services are the joint medical services, library services, printing services, commissary, buildings management services, catering service, security and safety section, interpretation services, garage operations and United Nations travel documents. The establishment of a common service facility under a central administrative body was raised in the context of the Centre's Consultative Committee on Common Services, and a working group was set up to consider possible options.

Geneva. Common services shared by the United Nations organizations at Geneva include the Joint Medical Service and the International Computing Centre. The latter is an example of interorganization and inter-duty station common approaches that provides services to United Nations organizations in New York, Geneva and Rome. A number of other services such as pouch, training and travel documents (laissez-passer) are provided by the United Nations to other organizations at Geneva. The Joint Inspection Unit has recently issued a report on common services at Geneva. Using that report as a springboard, the Director-General has initiated discussions with other organizations at Geneva to expand or create additional common services facilities in specific areas, notably in the printing, procurement and information technology sectors.

Action 27. Creation of an "electronic United Nations"

(a) **United Nations Web sites.** The connection of all the permanent missions to the United Nations in New York has enabled them to access the United Nations World Wide Web site and documents on the optical disk system. This illustrates the potential of such new technology, which

provides access to various kinds of information on the United Nations. At Geneva, over 90 per cent of the permanent missions are connected to the Internet and 80 missions are users of the optical disk system. The United Nations Office at Geneva has created a compendium of electronic publications, including Internet sites relevant to Geneva. At Vienna, nearly 70 per cent of the permanent missions have access to the Internet. On-line "virtual" meetings help to move towards videoconferencing, thus reducing the need for travel and providing greater flexibility for meeting arrangements.

The United Nations Web site, coordinated and managed by the Department of Public Information, has been significantly enhanced with the continuous addition of new material and the expansion to include all six official languages of the United Nations. It is projected that nearly 100 million accesses to the United Nations Web site, from more than 130 countries, will have taken place by the end of 1998. At the country level, 16 United Nations information centres have developed their own Web sites in local languages and many more are being developed. The audio and video capacity of the Web site is being actively expanded.

(b) **Documentation system.** The United Nations has continued to modernize ways in which documentation, correspondence, reports, publications and information are generated, processed, transferred, archived and accessed. This will contain the need to: (a) generate paper copies; (b) physically transfer documents by messenger or other means; (c) maintain physical local filing systems; and (d) publish information in hard-copy form. These efforts will be continued with the Internet, document management systems and printing on demand technologies. The United Nations Office at Geneva has implemented a new document tracking and information system, which will be integrated into an internal management control system to be developed shortly.

(c) **Use of the Intranet.** Major progress has been made in establishing a United Nations Intranet site, accessible at Headquarters as well as at Geneva and Vienna. Many departments have established home pages that provide quick access to information required to facilitate the work of the offices. It is anticipated that, through the use of more sophisticated Web publishing tools, this facility will make a major contribution to the simplification and streamlining of internal communication and transaction processing in the near future. The United Nations Office at Geneva has been using the Intranet for some time. Applications, such as the document tracking system mentioned in paragraph (b), will use Intranet technology. The Intranet Web site at the United Nations Office at Vienna has been redesigned and reorganized and includes more links to other United Nations Web sites.

(d) **Information technology strategy.** The information technology infrastructure of the United Nations, which covers a wide range of computing and telecommunications facilities, is based on current industry standards and is prepared to meet the worldwide challenges of "the year 2000 issue". Technology standards have been formulated and adopted as a first step towards a strategic approach to the management of information systems and technologies. As information and knowledge grow in importance, more detailed policies on information management will continue to be developed.

Action 28. Issue management system

The Administrative Committee on Coordination's ongoing discussion on the reform and strengthening of the United Nations system is providing the framework for pursuing the introduction of "issue management" methods and techniques at the inter-agency level, as provided for in this action. The coordination of agencies' contributions to the integrated follow-up to global conferences is a special focus of this effort, drawing on the experience already gained in this regard in the context of the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The Executive Committees are contributing on a continuing basis to the elaboration of proposals by the Secretary-General to ACC on areas where the "issue management" approach can be most effectively applied.

Action 29. United Nations University, research institutes and related bodies

(a) **Coordination.** Increased attention is being given to building a network of learning institutions within and outside the system and to utilizing more fully the research and capacity-building experience of the United Nations training and research institutes.

(b) **United Nations Staff College.** The United Nations Secretariat is cooperating closely with the Director of the United Nations Staff College in pursuing an overall strategic approach focused on reform. Major areas of focus will be those where the College can bring added value to the Organization's work in areas requiring system-wide strategic and operational planning and coordinated action.